

# *The Cost of Gender-Based Violence & Harassment (GBVH) to Kenya's Private Sector*

Research Report 2025

"At the heart of every statistic in this report is a person who walked  
into work today not feeling safe."

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Tiekie Barnard



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## About

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This study forms part of the IFC's Respectful Workplaces Program that seeks to enhance business value by addressing gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) connected to work in the private sector in emerging markets. The program aims to create safe and resilient workplaces by demonstrating the business case for action, providing businesses with advisory services, resources and tools to help them address the issue. IFC has worked with over 100 businesses on Respectful Workplaces through advisory services offered in the form of Respectful Workplaces diagnostics and implementation support with companies.

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# Why the Study Matters

## Understanding the Cost of GBVH in Kenya's Private Sector

Across Kenya, millions of people go to work each day seeking dignity, purpose, and financial security. Yet for far too many, the workplace is not a safe environment. Gender-Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH) remains one of the most pervasive but least addressed risks within organisations. It affects productivity, mental and physical health, organisational culture, and ultimately - economic performance.

Until now, there has been no Kenya-specific evidence quantifying the financial and productivity cost of GBVH to the private sector. Without data, it has been easy for businesses to underestimate the scale of the problem or to assume that the risks are limited to individual incidents rather than systemic patterns. This study fills that gap.

***This study applies rigorous methodology supporting its aims to be practical and evidence-based, with the goal of driving accountability, inform implementation and enabling systems change.***

The research was commissioned to answer a fundamental question: What does GBVH really cost Kenya's economy, and what does inaction mean for businesses, workers, and national development? The findings show that GBVH is not only a social and human rights concern, it is a measurable business risk and an economic barrier. Productivity losses, absenteeism, staff turnover, reputational damage, and compliance exposure all contribute to the financial burden companies face when GBVH goes unaddressed.

The data further reveals that GBVH is widely underreported. Many employees fear retaliation, job loss, or stigma if they speak up. As a result, early warning signs remain invisible until they escalate into crisis. This silence comes at a cost, not only to individuals but to organisations and national competitiveness.

Kenya is advancing toward stronger ESG expectations, mandatory disclosures, and alignment with international standards such as ILO Convention 190. Investors, consumers, and regulators increasingly expect companies to demonstrate their commitment to safe and respectful workplaces. Responding to GBVH is therefore not only the right thing to do, it is becoming a requirement for sustainable business operations.

The findings from this research provide an initial evidence base that has been missing. Addressing GBVH is not merely compliance, it is an investment in human capital, productivity, and long-term organisational resilience.

This research provides the evidence base Kenya has been missing. It offers businesses clarity, a starting point, and a way forward. The call to action is now clear: eliminate workplace GBVH not only because it protects people, but because it strengthens companies, economies, and the future of work in Kenya.

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*This report is a condensed version of the full research study, designed to provide strategic clarity and ease of reference. The essential analysis, insights, and validated findings are preserved in full. The full report is available upon request.*

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# List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AfDB	African Development Bank
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CREAW	Centre for Rights Education and Awareness
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GBVH	Gender-Based Violence and Harassment
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO C190	International Labour Organization Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)
KII	Key Informant Interview
KEPSA	Kenya Private Sector Alliance
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
NGEC	National Gender and Equality Commission
POLICARE	Police Care and Support Centres
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
UN WEPS	United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles
KU-WEE	Kenyatta University Women's Economic Empowerment

# Executive Summary

**Gender-Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH) continues to impose significant human and economic costs on Kenya's private sector. This research, commissioned by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), offers the first evidence-based estimate of the financial and productivity impact of GBVH in Kenyan workplaces.**

This study focuses primarily on gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) experienced within Kenya's private sector and recognises the broader international definition of violence and harassment, as set out under ILO Convention 190. It also captured related behaviours—including workplace bullying, non-gender-based harassment, physical violence, and technology-facilitated harassment. These related behaviours were included to capture the full organisational environment in which GBVH may occur and influence risk. While they informed contextual analysis and interpretation, the cost model itself is based solely on GBVH-specific experiences in line with the study design and international frameworks.

The findings confirm that GBVH is not only a human rights concern—it represents a material business and economic risk affecting productivity, profitability, workforce wellbeing, and national competitiveness.

## Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this study was to quantify the economic and productivity cost of GBVH to Kenya's private sector, determine prevalence, and identify risk patterns across organisational and demographic groups. The study also reviewed existing workplace response mechanisms, assessed the enabling policy and regulatory landscape, and identified priority actions for businesses, government, and development partners to reduce GBVH and strengthen prevention, accountability, and support systems.

## Methodology

A mixed-methods design was used, combining quantitative and qualitative research. Data was collected from 3,523 employees across 26 companies, supported by 26 key informant interviews and two focus group discussions. The employee survey, policy reviews, and statistical analysis (including propensity score matching) enabled financial cost estimation. Ethical clearance and confidentiality standards were upheld throughout.

## Key Findings

- **Prevalence:** 33.2% of employees experienced at least one form of GBVH, and 53.6% had observed it in their workplace. The most reported forms were verbal harassment (19%) and threats to job security (17%).
- **Perpetration:** 35% of respondents acknowledged engaging in behaviour constituting GBVH—highlighting its cultural normalisation in workplaces.
- **Risk Factors:** Women, junior/support staff, employees on short-term contracts, and those working in construction and financial services faced the highest vulnerability. Over half (57%) of cases involved persons in authority.

- **Underreporting:** 86% of incidents went unreported due to fear of retaliation, stigma, and lack of trust in reporting pathways.
- **Policy Gaps:** Most companies lacked standalone GBVH policies, and existing mechanisms were inconsistently communicated, applied, or trusted.

## Economic Impact

Employees who experienced GBVH lost an average of 24.3 working days annually, valued at KES 92,185 (USD 683.76) per employee. Across Kenya's private sector, the total annual cost of GBVH is estimated at:

**KES 95.5 billion (USD 0.71 billion) — equivalent to approximately 1% of GDP.**

*This includes:*

- **KES 67.0 billion** in productivity losses
- **KES 28.5 billion** in direct HR-related costs

*These losses manifest through absenteeism, presenteeism, turnover, decreased morale, and rising ESG and legal compliance risks.*

## Implications

Addressing GBVH is both a moral obligation and a strategic business priority. The cost of inaction outweighs the investment needed for prevention, training, accountability, and response systems. Safe workplaces strengthen employee wellbeing, operational efficiency, and corporate reputation - enhancing Kenya's progress toward gender equality, ESG alignment, and sustainable economic growth.

## Recommendations

*The study points towards:*

- Adoption of standalone GBVH policies with survivor-centred reporting channels
- Training and awareness across all workforce levels
- Leadership accountability linked to governance and culture metrics
- Strengthened data, reporting systems, and monitoring frameworks
- Cross-sector coordination aligned with ILO C190, the GBV Roadmap (2020–2026), and evolving ESG standards

## Conclusion

GBVH is a preventable barrier to productivity, dignity, and economic advancement. Companies that act now can reduce operational risk while improving retention, trust, and long-term performance. By prioritising respectful and safe workplaces, Kenya's private sector has an opportunity to lead the continent in responsible business — demonstrating that protecting people and improving profit are not competing interests but mutually reinforcing commitments.

# Key Terms and Terminology

## **Violence and Harassment (Including Gender-Based Violence and Harassment – GBVH):**

Any unacceptable behaviour, practice, action, communication or threat - whether occurring once or repeatedly, that causes, or is likely to cause, physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harm. This applies in all work-related settings including in person, virtually environments, during work-related travel, and in spaces connected to work.

## **Gender-Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH):**

Behaviour directed at an individual because of their biological sex gender, gender expression, or perceived gender role, or behaviour. GBVH is often rooted in power imbalances and social norms.

## **Technology-Facilitated Harassment:**

Use of digital tools—such as messaging apps, email, or social media—to intimidate, threaten, sexually harass, stalk, or humiliate a worker. This form of misconduct may overlap with GBVH when it is gendered, but was assessed separately for clarity

## **Sexual Harassment:**

Unwelcome direct or indirect conduct of a sexual nature that undermines dignity or creates a hostile or intimidating environment may include but not limited to:

**Quid Pro Quo Harassment:** When employment benefits, opportunities, or job security are tied to acceptance of sexual conduct.

**Hostile Work Environment:** Ongoing or severe sexual behaviour, comments, gestures, or conduct that creates fear, discomfort, or humiliation.

## **Workplace Violence and Harassment:**

Any act or threat of physical violence, psychological abuse, bullying, intimidation, or harassment occurring in a work-related context - whether onsite, offsite, or virtual - that threatens the safety, dignity, or well-being of employees.

## **Bullying:**

Repeated, persistent mistreatment of a person in the workplace that may be verbal, physical, social, or psychological in nature but is not necessarily based on gender. It includes acts like verbal aggression, exclusion, spreading rumours, or intimidation.

## **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):**

Abuse from a current or former partner that affects an employee's wellbeing, safety, or ability to work. IPV becomes relevant to the workplace when it impacts attendance, performance, safety, or workplace relationships.

## **Physical Violence:**

The use of physical force resulting in injury, harm, or the threat thereof. Although included in the survey to map the broader environment, physical violence is not analysed as GBVH unless it is gender-motivated or disproportionately affects one gender.

**Presenteeism:**

Being physically present at work but unable to perform at full capacity because of trauma, stress, fear, or other impacts of violence or harassment.

**Absenteeism:**

Missing work because of the emotional, psychological, or physical effects of violence or harassment.

**Tardiness:**

Arriving late to work or leaving early due to avoidance, stress, insecurity, or coping behaviours linked to GBVH.

**Perpetrator:**

A person who commits or enables behaviour that constitutes violence or harassment — whether intentional, repeated, or normalised as part of workplace culture.

**Witnessed Violence or Harassment:**

Experiencing GBVH indirectly by observing it or becoming aware that it has happened to another person.

**Bystander:**

Someone who is aware of violent or harassing behaviour but is not the direct target. A bystander may intervene, ignore, or report, affecting outcomes and reporting culture.

**Retaliation (Secondary Harm):**

Any negative consequence arising from reporting, resisting, or participating in a GBVH response process, including threats, exclusion, demotion, discipline misuse, or reputational harm.

**Reasonable Person Standard:**

A test used to evaluate whether behaviour is inappropriate by asking if an average person, under similar circumstances, would consider the conduct hostile, harmful, or unacceptable.

**Survivor-Centred Approach:**

A response that prioritises dignity, autonomy, confidentiality, safety, and non-discrimination in all procedures related to reporting, support, and resolution.

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Definitions adapted from ILO Convention 190, the IFC Respect@Work Framework, the Kenya Employment[TB2.1] Act (2007, amended 2022), and the IFC Respectful Workplaces Model Policy (2025).



# 1. *Introduction and context*

## 1.1 Background

Gender-Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH) is increasingly recognised as a critical workplace challenge globally and across Africa. While many organisations acknowledge GBVH as a human rights issue, its economic implications, operational impact, and influence on workplace culture are often underestimated or poorly understood. As Kenya advances toward stronger ESG expectations, legal compliance requirements, and alignment with emerging global standards such as ILO Convention 190, there is growing pressure on the private sector to move beyond awareness and take measurable action.

## 1.2 Rationale

Despite this momentum, there has been limited Kenya-specific evidence demonstrating how GBVH affects productivity, employee wellbeing, turnover, governance systems, and organisational risk. Existing literature often focuses on social or public health consequences, leaving a gap in understanding the financial implications for employers and the broader business environment. Without this data, many organisations lack the evidence base to prioritise prevention and response efforts or integrate GBVH into workplace safety, compliance, or human capital strategies.

## 1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study was undertaken to address that gap. It examines the prevalence and cost of GBVH within the Kenyan private sector, identifies high-risk environments and vulnerable groups, and assesses the current preparedness of organisations to prevent, respond to, and monitor GBVH. The intention is not only to provide evidence, but to support organisations, regulators, and stakeholders in understanding the link between safe workplaces and economic productivity.

## 1.4 Study Objectives

The overall purpose of this research was to generate evidence on the prevalence, patterns, and economic impact of Gender-Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH) within Kenya's private sector and to strengthen understanding of how GBVH affects productivity, workplace wellbeing, and organisational systems.

This study provide an initial evidence base to inform policy alignment, organisational responses, and action across the private sector ecosystem.

### **This research sought to:**

- Assess the prevalence and forms of GBVH experienced or witnessed in participating businesses.
- Examine the individual and organisational impacts of GBVH, including productivity loss, absenteeism, presenteeism, turnover, and reporting behaviour.
- Estimate the financial cost of GBVH to the private sector using a recognised costing methodology.
- Identify high-risk groups, environments, and

workplace dynamics contributing to vulnerability or exposure.

- Review existing organisational systems, reporting mechanisms, and policy readiness to prevent and respond to workplace GBVH.
- Capture qualitative insights to understand lived experience, cultural drivers, and systemic barriers to reporting and organisational response.
- Provide evidence-based recommendations to strengthen business practice, policy alignment, and workplace protections.

### Expected Application

Findings from this research are intended to support:

- Strengthened workplace policy and practice
- Improved reporting and response systems
- Greater leadership accountability and governance
- Alignment with emerging global standards and national policy direction
- A safer, more productive, and more equitable workplace environment in Kenya's private sector

## 1.4 Policy and Regulatory Context

The introduction of emerging global standards such as ILO Convention 190, the evolving Kenya labour

policy environment, and increasing ESG-linked reporting requirements present a strategic moment to strengthen workplace systems. Investors, consumers, multinational partners, and regulators are placing greater scrutiny on social risk management, workplace conduct, and employee wellbeing. Organisations that proactively address GBVH stand to benefit from improved retention, stronger governance, reduced legal and reputational exposure, and enhanced trust within their workforce.

Kenya's regulatory framework requires alignment with international standards such as ILO Convention 190, alongside national legislation including the Employment Act, 2007 (as amended), which outlines employer obligations for workplace safety, dignity, and protection from harassment.

## 1.5 Contribution and Expected Impact

By quantifying the cost of GBVH and documenting organisational realities, this research contributes to national evidence generation, informs future policy alignment, and provides a practical platform for private sector action. It positions respectful and safe workplaces not only as a moral imperative, but as a foundation for business resilience, productivity, and long-term economic growth in Kenya.

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*This introduction is informed by the IFC Respect@Work Framework, the Vara Horna methodology, Kenya's Employment Act (2007, amended 2022), and emerging international standards<sup>[TB3.1]</sup> including ILO Convention 190.*



# 2.

## *Literature Review*

**Gender-Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH) in the world of work has increasingly been recognised as both a human rights violation and a workplace and economic risk. International frameworks, including ILO Convention 190, underscore the obligation for employers to prevent and address GBVH. Global evidence demonstrates that workplace violence and harassment, including GBVH remains prevalent, underreported, and often normalised through cultural and structural barriers (ILO, 2022).**

Research also shows that GBVH contributes to significant productivity loss, absenteeism, presenteeism, high turnover, and psychological distress, affecting operational efficiency and labour market outcomes (International Labour Organization, 2024; Duvvury et al., 2023; Hassard et al., 2019; World Health Organization, 2021). Despite increased awareness, studies show workplace systems frequently lack confidential reporting mechanisms, survivor-centred processes, or enforceable accountability structures (World Health Organization, 2021).

Global costing studies reinforce the economic significance of GBVH. Estimates show that GBVH costs the European Union approximately €366 billion annually, with intimate partner violence representing nearly half of this burden (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). In the United States, the lifetime economic burden of intimate partner violence is estimated at USD 3.6 trillion, with medical expenditure and lost productivity accounting for the largest share (Peterson et al., 2018). Evidence from Canada further shows reduced economic participation for survivors and lifetime earnings loss estimated at USD 334 billion (Zhang et al., 2012). These findings highlight consistent patterns across contexts: the costs of inaction exceed the investment required for prevention and workplace system strengthening.

### **2.1 Regional Context: Evidence from Africa**

In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), research indicates high prevalence rates linked to harmful gender norms, socio-economic inequality, and unequal power structures. An estimated 33% of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical or sexual GBVH (World Health Organization, 2021). Studies estimate the economic cost of GBVH across African economies at 1.2–2% of GDP, driven by healthcare utilisation, legal proceedings, loss of productivity, and interruption of labour participation (Duvvury et al., 2023; Ouedraogo & Stenzel, 2021). Evidence also shows variations across countries: Sierra Leone records a prevalence of 60.27%, while South Africa shows significant productivity-linked economic loss (Katende-Kyenda & Ani, 2025; Vyas et al., 2023). However, few African studies quantify GBVH's impact at firm level, limiting employers' ability to assess risk exposure or cost implications.

## 2.2 Kenya-Specific Evidence

Kenyan research reflects similar trends. Over 40% of women report having experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence, with widespread under-reporting due to stigma, retaliation risk, and limited trust in justice and support systems (Kenya Demographic and Health Survey, 2022; Ikwara et al., 2025). The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC, 2016) estimated substantial direct and indirect costs to survivors, including medical costs, legal fees, lost wages, and long-term productivity reduction. However, this research was limited by sample size and focused primarily on survivors' personal and household burden rather than organisational impact or employer cost.

Studies indicate that organisational cultures in Kenya often lack adequate prevention frameworks, structured reporting systems, and leadership accountability (International Labour Organization, 2024; World Health Organization, 2021). Research also highlights gaps in implementation despite evolving legal frameworks aligned with ILO Convention 190 and national employment policy reforms.

## 2.3 Economic and Business Case Evidence

While research across regions acknowledges the operational and productivity impact of GBVH, empirical costing at firm level remains limited — particularly in Kenya. International costing models, including those applied in Vietnam, Uganda, and Bangladesh, estimate output losses between 1.27% and 1.6% of GDP due to IPV-related absenteeism alone (Vara Horna, 2013). Kenya-specific analysis, however, remains underdeveloped, leaving a critical evidence gap regarding how GBVH affects operational performance, labour continuity, and financial sustainability at company level.

## 2.4 Knowledge Gap

Despite growing evidence linking GBVH to productivity, employee wellbeing, governance risk, and economic output, there remains **no Kenya-specific study quantifying the cost of GBVH to private-sector employers**. Existing literature primarily focuses on prevalence and social or public-health consequences. This research directly responds to that gap by establishing the first firm-level costing model to quantify the financial burden of GBVH within Kenya's private sector.



# 3. Methodology

## 3.1 Study Design

A mixed-methods approach was used to assess the prevalence, experience, and cost implications of Gender-Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH) in the Kenyan private sector. The study combined quantitative and qualitative data to capture both measurable trends and deeper contextual insights.

## 3.2 Sampling and Participants

A total of **3,523 employees** from **26 companies** participated in the study. Organisations represented diverse sectors, sizes, and geographic locations. Participants included managers, supervisors, technical staff, and support employees across permanent, temporary, and contract roles. Employers participated voluntarily.

## 3.3 Data Collection Methods

### Data was collected through:

- **Employee Survey:** Measuring prevalence, behaviours, reporting patterns, productivity impacts, and organisational response.
- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** Conducted with company leaders, HR professionals, and focal points to understand organisational systems and reporting realities.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Captured lived experiences, barriers, and workplace culture factors influencing reporting and protection.
- **Document Review:** Company HR policies, reporting mechanisms, and existing workplace procedures were assessed to understand system readiness and alignment with best practice.

## 3.4 Costing Approach

To estimate productivity and financial impact, the study applied the **Vara Horna methodology**, an internationally recognised model for costing workplace violence and harassment. This enabled calculation of:

- Absenteeism
- Presenteeism
- Staff turnover
- HR and case management-related costs

Cost estimates reflect employee-reported impacts and organisation-level trends.

## 3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study followed strict ethical research standards. Participation was voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. No identifying personal data was collected. Researchers followed survivor-sensitive protocols, ensured trauma-informed questioning, and provided referral information where needed. Only authorised members of the research team had access to raw data.

## 3.6 Data Analysis

The analysis process was structured to ensure reliability, consistency, and meaningful interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data. Analysis was conducted in multiple stages as outlined below.

### **Quantitative Analysis**

Survey data was cleaned, validated, and analysed using descriptive and comparative statistics. Frequencies and cross-tabulations were used to explore patterns across gender, sector, job role, and employment type. Measures of association were applied to identify statistically meaningful relationships between GBVH experience and workplace outcomes such as absenteeism, presenteeism, turnover intention, and productivity loss.

### **Costing Calculations**

Financial estimates were derived using the **Vara Horna costing framework**, which links employee-reported impacts to economic loss. Cost categories included absenteeism, presenteeism, turnover, and HR-related incident management. Productivity estimates were calculated using employee-reported lost days and average sector-based wage values.

### **Comparative and Subgroup Analysis**

Data was disaggregated across sector, gender, age group, contract type, pay level, and organisational hierarchy to assess differential exposure and risk patterns. This analysis helped identify structural vulnerabilities and high-risk environments within sectors and job categories.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

Interview and focus group data was analysed using a thematic coding approach. Recurring patterns, attitudes, barriers, and emerging themes were identified to build contextual understanding around workplace culture, reporting behaviour, psychological safety, and response system effectiveness.

### **Triangulation**

Quantitative and qualitative findings were compared to validate patterns and discrepancies, ensuring a balanced interpretation. Triangulation also strengthened confidence in key findings where quantitative and qualitative evidence aligned.

### **Interpretation and Validation**

Findings were reviewed against the research objectives, emerging global evidence, and real-world organisational context. Internal review checkpoints were used to verify consistency, coherence, and alignment with ethical standards.

## **3.7 Limitations**

As with all workplace-based self-report research, underreporting remains a potential constraint. Participation varied across companies, sectors, and job levels. While the sample is diverse and indicative of the private sector context, results should be interpreted as a representative estimate rather than an exact national measurement.

*Methodology informed by the Vara Horna costing model and standard mixed-methods research[TB4.1] practice.*



# 4. Findings

## 4.1 Survey and Key Informant Interviews Summary

Between 1 August and 22 September 2025, a total of **3,523 employees** responded to the online survey. Of these, **3,399 respondents** completed the questionnaire in full and were included in the final dataset, exceeding the minimum required sample of **2,401 employees** to reliably estimate the prevalence of GBVH in the study population.

The survey was complemented by **26 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)** with company representatives and stakeholders, and **two focus group discussions**, drawn from a pool of **41 invited companies**. In total, **26 companies** from **Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Eldoret and Naivasha** participated in either the survey, KIIs or both, representing a mix of large, medium and smaller firms across priority sectors.

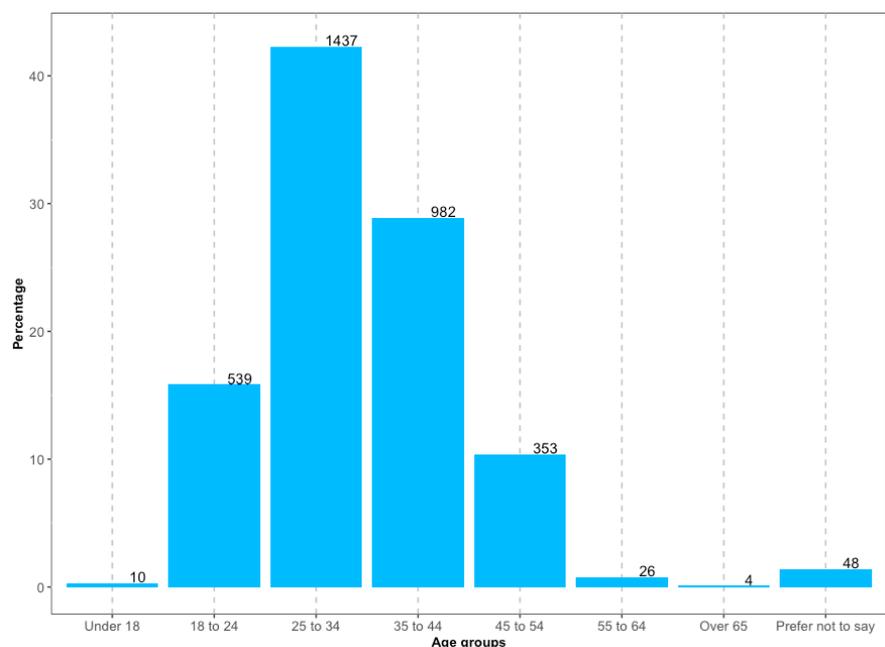
Together, the quantitative and qualitative data sources provide a robust picture of how GBVH manifests in selected workplaces, how companies are responding, and what it costs in terms of productivity and financial performance.

## 4.2 Demographic Characteristics

The survey sample reflects a predominantly working-age population in formal employment. **Women made up 53.5% (n = 1,818)** of respondents, with men accounting for the balance. The largest age cohorts were **25–34 years (42.2%; n = 1,437)** and **35–44 years (28.9%; n = 982)**, resulting in a mean age of **33.7 years (SD 9.08)**. (See Figure 1 and Figure 2 in the full report.)

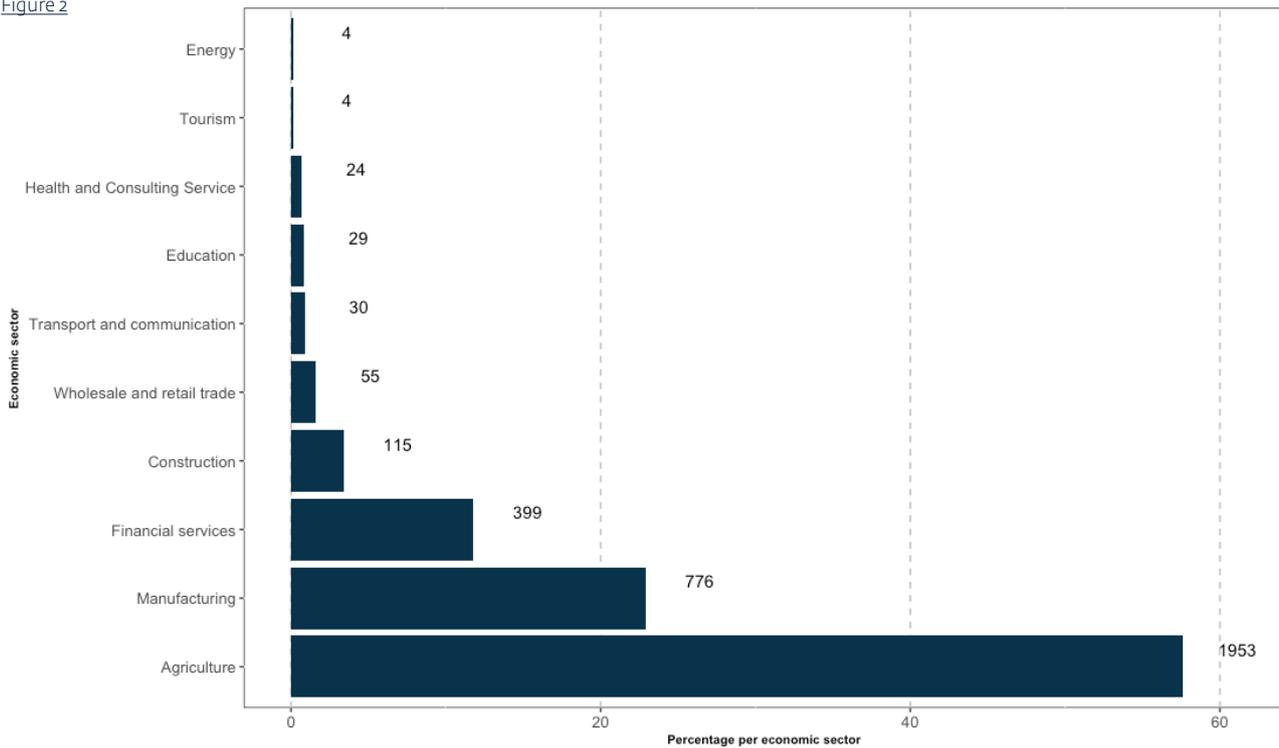
In terms of job roles, junior staff constituted the single largest

Figure 1



Note: Numerical values in this condensed report are summarised for readability. Full statistical tables[TB5.1], subgroup analysis, and costing calculations are available in the detailed Research Report.

Figure 2



group at **42.7% (n = 1,452)**, followed by support staff (**18.5%; n = 630**), middle management (**13.0%; n = 443**), senior staff (**14.7%; n = 499**), interns/trainees (**4.7%; n = 160**), senior management (**2.7%; n = 90**) and other roles (**3.7%; n = 125**).

Ten economic sectors were represented. The agricultural sector accounted for the majority of respondents (**57.6%; n = 1,953**), followed by manufacturing (**22.9%;**

**n = 776**). Sectors such as energy, tourism, health, and consulting services were represented at lower levels (each less than 2% of the sample).

Tenure with current employers varied: **32.3%** had worked for **1–3 years**, **22.0%** for **4–6 years**, **12.0%** for **7–10 years**, and **17.8%** for **more than 10 years**, while **15.9%** had been with their employer for less than a year. (See Table 1 and Figure 3.)

Figure 3

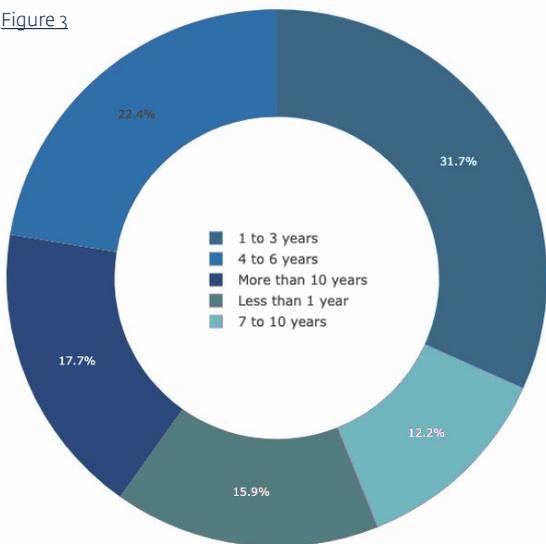


Table 1

Variable (n)	Total n (%)
Job Cadre (n)	
Other role not listed	125 (3.7%)
Intern or trainee	160 (4.7%)
Support staff	630 (18.5%)
Junior staff	1452 (42.7%)
Senior staff	499 (14.7%)
Middle management	443 (13.0%)
Senior management	90 (2.7%)
Number of years the respondents had worked for their employer	
Less than 1 year	539 (15.9%)
1 to 3 years	1098 (32.3%)
4 to 6 years	749 (22.0%)
7 to 10 years	408 (12.0%)
More than 10 years	605 (17.8%)

Note: Numerical values in this condensed report are summarised for readability. Full statistical tables [TB5.1], subgroup analysis, and costing calculations are available in the detailed Research Report.

### 4.3 Prevalence of GBVH in Kenya's Private Sector

Findings from KIIs and the employee survey present a stark contrast between **officially reported cases and employee-reported experiences** of GBVH. From the KIIs, **50% of participating firms** indicated that they had recorded at least one case of GBVH in the preceding two years. Most of these firms reported between **one and five** cases over the period, and only **two firms** reported more than five cases. When viewed as a proportion of total staff complements, formal case numbers appear very low, suggesting under-detection or under-reporting.

By contrast, the employee survey indicates that **GBVH is widespread in workplaces:**

- **33.2%** of respondents reported experiencing **at least one form of GBVH at work (95% CI: 31.7–34.8%; p < 0.00001; n = 1,170).**
- The most frequently reported forms were:
  - o Verbal harassment and sustained bullying behaviours: **19% (n = 617)**
  - o Threats to job security or career: **17% (n = 581)**
  - o Discrimination/unfair treatment: **approximately 14%**
  - o Unwanted physical or sexual contact: **around 6%**

- o Physical assault or threats of physical harm: **6.0% (n = 196)**

- o Harassment through digital channels: **6.0–6.1% (n ≈ 196)**

(See Table 4: Distribution of the types of GBVH experienced by our respondents.)

GBVH is not only experienced directly; it is also widely **observed**. More than **half of respondents (53.6%; n = 1,888)** reported witnessing what they believed to be other employees being subjected to GBVH during the past 12 months (**95% CI: 51.9–55.2%; p < 0.00001**). The most commonly observed form was workplace bullying (**39.5%; n = 1,264**), followed by sexual harassment (**31.3%; n = 995**), physical violence (**27.4%; n = 866**), and online harassment (**23.9%; n = 754**).

Table 4

Characteristic	Female N = 1,818 <sup>†</sup>	Male N = 1,528 <sup>†</sup>	Other <sup>†</sup> N = 13	Prefer not to answer N = 40
<b>job.cadre.respondent</b>				
Other role not listed	73 (4.0%)	46 (3.0%)	1 (7.7%)	5 (13%)
Intern or Trainee	87 (4.8%)	69 (4.5%)	2 (15%)	2 (5.0%)
Support staff	336 (18%)	286 (19%)	2 (15%)	6 (15%)
Junior staff	797 (44%)	637 (42%)	1 (7.7%)	17 (43%)
Senior staff	252 (14%)	240 (16%)	3 (23%)	4 (10%)
Middle management	220 (12%)	218 (14%)	1 (7.7%)	4 (10%)
Senior management	53 (2.9%)	32 (2.1%)	3 (23%)	2 (5.0%)
<b>period.work.employer</b>				
Less than 1 year	277 (15%)	249 (16%)	3 (23%)	10 (25%)
1 to 3 years	585 (32%)	500 (33%)	4 (31%)	9 (23%)
4 to 6 years	348 (19%)	386 (25%)	4 (31%)	11 (28%)
7 to 10 years	232 (13%)	172 (11%)	2 (15%)	2 (5.0%)
More than 10 years	376 (21%)	221 (14%)	0 (0%)	8 (20%)
<sup>†</sup> n (%)				

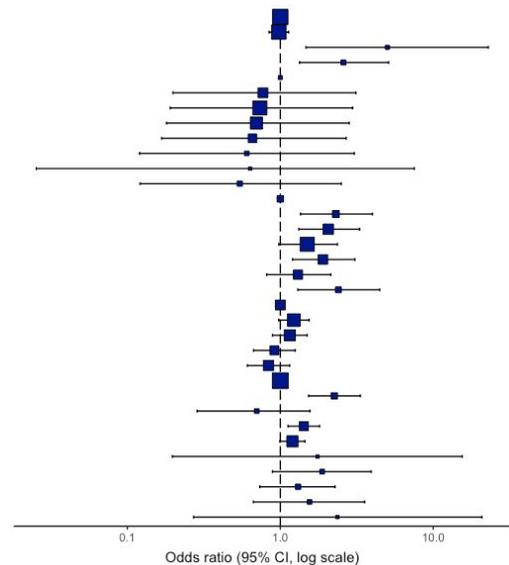
Note: Numerical values in this condensed report are summarised for readability. Full statistical tables[TB5.1], subgroup analysis, and costing calculations are available in the detailed Research Report.

A notable share of respondents (**35.9%; n = 1,124**) also believed that colleagues had been affected by **domestic or intimate partner violence** in ways that impacted their work, highlighting intersections between workplace GBVH and violence occurring outside the workplace. (See Table 6 in the full report.)

Table 6

experienced.any.gbvh: OR (95% CI, p-value)

gender	Female	0.98 (0.84-1.13, p=0.776)
	Male	5.01 (1.47-22.91, p=0.017)
	Other	2.59 (1.34-5.11, p=0.005)
age.groups	Prefer not to answer	-
	Under 18	-
	18 to 24	0.77 (0.20-3.12, p=0.702)
	25 to 34	0.74 (0.19-2.97, p=0.651)
	35 to 44	0.70 (0.18-2.82, p=0.597)
	45 to 54	0.66 (0.17-2.70, p=0.543)
	55 to 64	0.60 (0.12-3.05, p=0.534)
	Over 65	0.64 (0.03-7.53, p=0.735)
job.cadre.respondent	Prefer not to say	0.54 (0.12-2.51, p=0.421)
	Other role not listed	-
	Intern or Trainee	2.31 (1.36-4.00, p=0.002)
	Support staff	2.06 (1.32-3.30, p=0.002)
	Junior staff	1.50 (0.98-2.36, p=0.071)
	Senior staff	1.90 (1.20-3.08, p=0.007)
	Middle management	1.30 (0.81-2.14, p=0.278)
period.work.employer	Senior management	2.40 (1.30-4.47, p=0.005)
	Less than 1 year	-
	1 to 3 years	1.23 (0.98-1.54, p=0.081)
	4 to 6 years	1.15 (0.89-1.50, p=0.283)
sector.of.respondent	7 to 10 years	0.92 (0.67-1.25, p=0.579)
	More than 10 years	0.84 (0.61-1.15, p=0.275)
	Agriculture	-
	Construction	2.26 (1.53-3.34, p<0.001)
Education	0.70 (0.29-1.56, p=0.407)	
Financial services	1.43 (1.12-1.81, p=0.003)	
Manufacturing	1.20 (0.99-1.45, p=0.057)	
Tourism	1.75 (0.20-15.47, p=0.589)	
Transport and communication	1.88 (0.89-3.93, p=0.093)	
Wholesale and retail trade	1.31 (0.73-2.28, p=0.350)	
Health and Consulting Service	1.55 (0.67-3.56, p=0.296)	
Energy	2.36 (0.27-20.81, p=0.404)	



#### 4.4 Risk Factors and Vulnerable Groups

Analysis of the survey data shows that **GBVH is not randomly distributed**; instead, it is shaped by gender, job status, tenure, and sector. There was a **statistically significant relationship** between experiencing any form of GBVH and:

- **Gender** ( $p < 0.001$ )
- **Job cadre** ( $p < 0.001$ )
- **Number of years with current employer** ( $p < 0.001$ )
- **Economic sector** ( $p < 0.001$ )

There was no **significant relationship** between age group and experience of GBVH ( $p = 0.11$ ).

##### Key patterns include:

- **Gender:** Being male was associated with a **63.6% decrease** in the odds of experiencing GBVH compared to being female, confirming that women

are disproportionately affected.

- **Job cadre:** Compared with middle management, the odds of experiencing GBVH were:
  - o **131% higher** for **interns/trainees**
  - o **106% higher** for **support staff**
  - o **90% higher** for **senior staff**
  - o **140% higher** for **senior management** ( $p = 0.001$ )

This pattern suggests that both those with **less power** (e.g. interns, support staff) and those in **high-responsibility roles** (senior staff and senior management) face elevated risk, albeit in different ways.

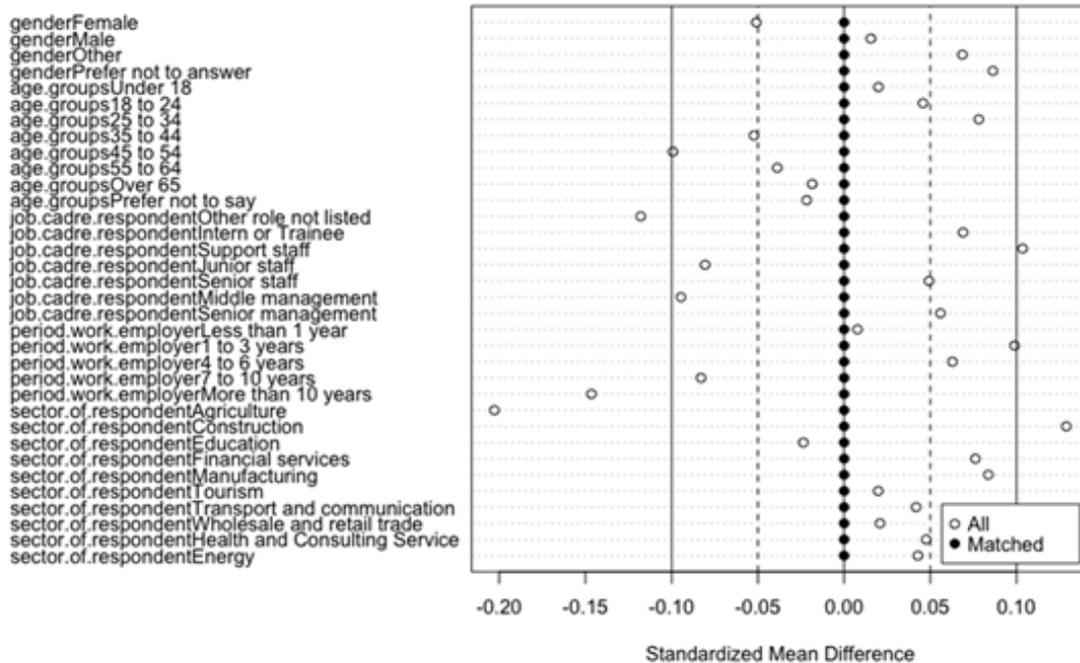
- **Tenure:** Employees who had worked for **1–3 years** had a **23% increase** in odds of experiencing GBVH compared to those employed for less than a year, while longer tenure (more than three years) was not significantly associated with increased risk.

Note: Numerical values in this condensed report are summarised for readability. Full statistical tables[TB5.1], subgroup analysis, and costing calculations are available in the detailed Research Report.

- **Sector:** Working in **construction** and **financial services** was associated with a **126%** and **43%** increase in the odds of experiencing GBVH, respectively, compared with working in the **agricultural sector**, while other sectors were not statistically significant ( $p = 0.001$ ).

These findings confirm that **women, junior and support staff, short-tenure employees**, and those in certain **high-pressure sectors** face heightened vulnerability. They also highlight that power dynamics, rather than age alone, drive exposure to GBVH. (See Table 3, Figure 4, and Figure 5: forest plot of risk factors in the full report.)

Figure 5



#### 4.5 Company-Level Strategies and Mechanisms

Most participating companies have some form of **HR or grievance procedures** in place, but the study reveals significant gaps in **prevention, reporting, and response systems** specific to GBVH.

Key informant interviews and survey responses indicate that:

- Many firms **do not have standalone GBVH policies**; instead, GBVH is often subsumed under general codes of conduct or sexual harassment clauses that do not cover bullying, psychological abuse, or digital harassment comprehensively.
- Policy provisions are **not consistently communicated or implemented**, and staff are often **unclear about reporting channels** or fear that complaints will not be handled fairly.
- **Underreporting is pervasive:** an estimated **86%** of GBVH incidents go unreported, primarily due to fears of retaliation, job loss, stigma, and concerns about confidentiality.
- Mechanisms such as internal focal points, hotlines, or anonymous reporting tools are either **absent, under-resourced, or not trusted** by employees.
- Few companies systematically **monitor GBVH data**, link GBVH indicators to **ESG or risk management frameworks**, or integrate GBVH into **leadership performance and culture change** metrics.

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Overall, the evidence points to a **policy–practice gap**. While some firms have started to strengthen workplace policies, the **implementation of survivor-centred, confidential, and accessible systems** remains inconsistent across the sample.

## 4.6 Economic and Business Costs of GBVH to the Private Sector

The costing analysis shows that GBVH is associated with substantial **productivity losses** and **financial costs** at both **firm** and **economy-wide** levels. Using propensity score matching to isolate the impact of GBVH on work outcomes, the study estimates that employees who experience GBVH lose **24.3 working days per year**, on average, compared with employees who do not report such experiences.

This translates into an average cost of **KES 92,185 (USD 683.76) per affected employee per year**, incorporating lost productivity and related HR-linked costs.

### 4.4.1 Estimation of Productivity Losses Due to GBVH per Employee

*Productivity losses arise from:*

- **Absenteeism** (days entirely missed due to GBVH and its consequences)
- **Presenteeism** (being at work but unable to perform at full capacity)
- **Tardiness** (arriving late or leaving early)
- **Work errors and safety incidents**
- **Time spent managing or resolving GBVH incidents** (HR, supervisors, witnesses)

The modelling indicates that GBVH-affected employees experience **higher rates of all these outcomes**, resulting in the estimated **24.3 lost workdays** per year per survivor. These losses are monetised using wage

data for the sample and extrapolated to the wider private sector workforce. (See costing tables in Section 4.6 of the full report.)

### 4.4.2 Total Cost of GBVH to the Private Sector

When results are scaled to Kenya's private sector as a whole, the **total annual cost of GBVH** is estimated at approximately **KES 95.5 billion (USD 0.71 billion)**, equivalent to around **1% of national GDP**.

*This figure comprises:*

- **KES 67.0 billion in productivity losses** (absenteeism, presenteeism, and reduced performance)
- **KES 28.5 billion in direct HR-related costs**, including recruitment, induction and training of replacement staff, disciplinary processes, and related management time.

Beyond these quantifiable costs, businesses also face **reputational risks**, increased **ESG and legal compliance exposure**, and potential impacts on **employee engagement, innovation, and retention**. The results underscore **that the cost of inaction is substantial** and directly affects firm-level competitiveness and long-term sustainability.

## 4.7 Policy and Service Mapping

Policy and service mapping undertaken as part of the study shows that Kenya has a **relatively strong legal and policy framework** addressing GBV and workplace harassment, including alignment with **ILO Convention 190**, the **Employment Act**, and the **GBV Roadmap (2020–2026)**.

*Note: Numerical values in this condensed report are summarised for readability. Full statistical tables[TB5.1], subgroup analysis, and costing calculations are available in the detailed Research Report.*

However, several gaps remain between national frameworks and workplace practice:

- Many companies have **not yet translated legal obligations into comprehensive internal GBVH policies**, procedures, and training.
- Existing **reporting and support mechanisms** (both internal and external) are unevenly known and accessed. Employees often lack clear information on where to go, what to expect, and how their confidentiality will be protected.
- Referral linkages to **external services** - such as health providers, psychosocial support, legal aid, and police units like **POLICARE** - are not consistently integrated into company procedures.
- Data on GBVH is **not systematically captured or aggregated** across companies or sectors, limiting the ability of regulators, business associations, and development partners to monitor trends or assess progress over time.

Overall, the policy and service mapping confirms that while **Kenya's enabling environment is evolving**, there is a pressing need to **strengthen the implementation of GBVH-related policies at company level**, ensure **survivor-centred support**, and embed GBVH indicators within broader **ESG, risk management, and human capital strategies**. (See Section 4.7 and the Policy Mapping tables in the full report.)

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Note: Numerical values in this condensed report are summarised for readability. Full statistical tables<sup>[TB5.1]</sup>, subgroup analysis, and costing calculations are available in the detailed Research Report.



# 5.

## *Discussion*

The findings from this study paint a clear and concerning picture: *GBVH is not an isolated or infrequent occurrence within Kenya's private sector workplaces.* While reported cases through formal workplace systems appear minimal, employee data shows GBVH to be *significantly more widespread*, affecting both individuals and the broader operational effectiveness of companies. This disconnect between reported and experienced prevalence speaks to deeper issues of culture, trust, power, and structural barriers that shape how GBVH is understood, disclosed, and managed.

The gap between official reporting patterns and employee experiences signals that the current system is **not capturing the lived reality inside workplaces**. Instead, GBVH is operating largely beneath the surface — unreported, unaddressed, and often normalised within workplace dynamics. This reinforces the need to interpret the numbers not only as statistics, but as evidence of systemic patterns, perceptions, risks, and consequences that influence both organisational culture and business outcomes.

### *Patterns in the Findings*

**Three consistent patterns emerge across the data.**

First, **GBVH is unevenly distributed**. Women, interns, junior and support staff, and workers in certain high-pressure sectors bear the greatest burden. This suggests that GBVH is **not random misconduct** — it is shaped by power relations, role vulnerability, and organisational hierarchies.

Second, GBVH manifests in **multiple forms — many of which fall outside traditional concepts of sexual harassment**. Bullying, discriminatory treatment, verbal aggression, and digital harassment appear as prominent experiences, yet are less likely to be captured by existing workplace policies. This indicates a **mismatch between what employees experience and what organisations define as inappropriate behaviour**.

Finally, there is a clear intersection between **workplace violence and violence outside the workplace**, particularly intimate partner violence. Employees who carry the consequences of violence into the workplace experience reduced productivity, distress, presenteeism, and compromised professional confidence.

## The Human and Economic Dimension

Behind each statistic is a person who walked into work — not simply to earn a wage, but to build a livelihood, career, and sense of value. Experiences of GBVH undermine the ability to do that. They erode confidence, safety, dignity, and trust.

This has material consequences. Losses in productivity, absenteeism, presenteeism, turnover, and operational disruptions are not incidental: they represent **a recurring and preventable cost to business**. The estimated **24.3 working days lost per affected employee each year**, and the associated **KES 95.5 billion cost to the private sector**, reinforce that GBVH is **not merely a social issue — it is an economic and competitiveness issue**.

The cost modelling shows that GBVH affects not just individuals, but **team functioning, institutional resilience, leadership credibility, and the integrity of organisational systems**. In a context where businesses are increasingly measured on ESG performance, workforce wellbeing, and risk management, these findings have direct implications for governance and sustainability.

## Systemic Gaps and Structural Drivers

The contrast between existing legal frameworks and workplace realities highlights a critical systemic challenge: *policies exist, but implementation remains uneven*. Many companies have codes of conduct or sexual harassment clauses, yet these often fail to address the full spectrum of GBVH or provide clear reporting pathways employees trust.

The study shows that silence is not absence — **it is a signal of fear, lack of confidence in systems, and cultures where survivors do not believe reporting will lead to safety, dignity, or justice**. This means the issue is not simply procedural; it is cultural. Reporting mechanisms that lack confidentiality, protection, or credible follow-up inadvertently reinforce silence and allow harmful behaviour to continue unchecked.

## Implications Moving Forward

Together, these insights indicate that addressing GBVH in the workplace is not only about strengthening policies — **it is about transforming systems, leadership accountability, culture, and the everyday experiences of workers**. The findings show that *effective responses require an integrated approach across prevention, protection, reporting, support, and accountability*.

This work cannot remain peripheral. The evidence demonstrates that **investing in safe, respectful workplaces is both a moral obligation and a business imperative**, shaping productivity, profitability, and long-term organisational sustainability.



# 6. *Challenges & Lessons Learned*

**Conducting this study brought to the surface several challenges that shaped the pace, scope, and depth of the research. These were not obstacles to completion, but important signals about the sensitivity of the topic, the maturity of workplace systems addressing GBVH, and the realities of conducting evidence-based research in organisational settings.**

A key challenge related to **company readiness and sign-off requirements**. Some organisations required multiple levels of internal approval before participating, which extended timelines and resulted in staggered engagement. Additionally, **GBVH as a topic remains sensitive**, and some companies expressed concern about perceived reputational risk, even though participation was anonymised.

The research team also encountered **varying levels of data availability and documentation**, particularly relating to reporting mechanisms, case numbers, and costing. Many organisations were not yet collecting GBVH-specific data, which limited comparative analysis and highlighted a broader structural gap.

A critical lesson from this process is the importance of establishing **trust, confidentiality, and clear communication** from the outset. Where companies had strong internal champions or leadership endorsement, engagement progressed more smoothly and participation was stronger.

Finally, the pilot underscored the value of including both **quantitative and qualitative components**. The combination enabled the research to move beyond reported numbers and capture the **context, culture, and lived experience** that shape how GBVH manifests and is understood in the workplace.

These insights offer a road map for strengthening future studies and building greater private-sector engagement and ownership around the issue.



# 7.

## *Recommendations*

The findings from this study indicate that addressing GBVH requires a coordinated approach across multiple levels of the ecosystem including companies, government, unions, civil society, development partners, and regulators. Policies alone are insufficient without systems, data, leadership accountability, and sustained investment.

### *7.1 Recommendations for Private Sector*

- Adopt a **standalone GBVH workplace policy** that explicitly covers bullying, intimidation, sexual harassment, and digital harassment and is integrated into HR, ethics, and governance systems.
- Establish **confidential and accessible reporting mechanisms**, such as trained focal points, anonymous digital tools, or third-party hotlines, with clear response procedures and survivor protections.
- Strengthen **leadership accountability and culture change**, ensuring Respect@Work responsibilities are tied to management performance expectations and organisational values.
- Provide **ongoing employee training and awareness programmes**, including bystander intervention skills, using accessible formats and languages (English and Swahili).
- Formalise partnerships with **external experts and services** (legal, psychosocial, medical) rather than attempting to internalise all support functions.
- Prioritise **ongoing data collection and analysis**, such as risk assessments, perception surveys, and incident trends - to understand the prevalence and cost of GBVH, monitor shifts in workplace culture, build trust in reporting systems, and track progress over time.
- Integrate GBVH indicators into **ESG, risk management, and sustainability metrics** to strengthen transparency, accountability, and responsible investment alignment.

### *7.2 Recommendations for Government and Regulators*

- Fast-track alignment of workplace legislation with **ILO Convention 190** and ensure enforcement mechanisms are clear and operational.
- Develop national workplace GBVH reporting standards **for data collection**, accompanied by incentives for compliance and consequences for non-action.
- Support SMEs through **subsidised training, policy templates, and shared reporting infrastructure** to reduce cost and capacity barriers.
- Strengthen coordination across labour offices, police, judiciary, and specialised GBV response units to ensure

#### **survivor-centred case handling.**

- Build capacity among labour inspectors and regulatory teams in **trauma-informed investigation and compliance monitoring**.
- Integrate GBVH considerations into **routine labour inspections and occupational health audits**.
- Facilitate **national referral pathways** linking workplaces with accredited medical, psychosocial, and legal support services.
- Promote public messaging and campaigns linking **respectful workplaces to national productivity, economic stability, and business competitiveness**.

### 7.3 Recommendations for Development Partners and DFIs

- Scale **Respect@Work training and advisory programmes** using this research as baseline evidence for engagement with the private sector.
- Provide catalytic support to digitise **reporting, monitoring, and data systems**, enabling evidence-driven accountability.
- Facilitate **regional knowledge exchange** on promising practices across IFC partner countries and private sector platforms.
- Support **technical assistance and capacity-building partnerships** to strengthen private sector readiness and accountability structures.
- Integrate GBVH and gender equality indicators into **ESG, monitoring, and evaluation frameworks** for advisory and investment portfolios.
- Encourage **regular disclosure and accountability** among investees and partners regarding GBVH risk management and case response.
- Continue investing in **research and measurement** to track progress and build the business case for prevention.

### 7.4 Proposed Interventions with ROI Potential

*Priority interventions with the strongest evidence of return on investment include:*

- **Leadership certification programmes** to embed accountability and prevent misconduct before escalation.
- **Digital awareness and reporting platforms** that improve access, confidentiality, and employee trust.
- **Annual GBVH workplace audits linked to ESG reporting** to strengthen transparency and improve investor confidence.

These interventions offer demonstrated business value by improving productivity, reducing turnover and absenteeism, strengthening brand reputation, and increasing investor trust.



# 8.

## *Conclusion*

**This study provides the first consolidated evidence on the prevalence, nature, and economic impact of GBVH within selected workplaces in Kenya’s private sector. The findings demonstrate that while formal reporting remains low, lived experiences of GBVH are widespread and have measurable effects on productivity, employee wellbeing, and organisational performance. The analysis further highlights structural patterns linked to gender, hierarchy, job status, and workplace culture — pointing to systemic rather than isolated drivers.**

The results reinforce that the cost of GBVH extends beyond individual harm. Lost productivity, turnover, reduced engagement, reputational exposure, and operational inefficiencies collectively translate into a significant financial burden for companies and the broader economy. At an estimated **KES 95.5 billion annually**, GBVH represents both a human rights concern and a material business risk, affecting competitiveness, sustainability, and organisational resilience.

Addressing this requires coordinated action across the ecosystem — from employers, government, regulators, investors, and service providers. Strengthening prevention, reporting, response, and accountability systems will be essential to closing the gap between policy and practice, and to building workplaces where dignity, respect, and safety are standard, not optional.

Ultimately, the evidence makes clear that investing in safe and respectful workplaces is not only the right thing to do - it is a strategic and economic imperative. And behind every percentage point, cost estimate, or data trend reflected in this report is a person who deserves to work without fear, intimidation, or harm. Ensuring this reality - where every employee can work safely and with dignity - must now be the collective commitment going forward.

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*The Cost of  
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